

MANTLE AND FANS AT PEACE AGAIN

His Jaw Still Hurts From
Fracas on Monday, but
Crowd Is Apathetic

By ROBERT M. LIPSYTE
Center field at Yankee Stadium was a Sunday School picnic grounds last night. No one littered the greensward, no one used bad language. No one walloped Mickey Mantle.

It was a Valhalla for center fielders. Mantle handled four chances, all easy fly balls, with grace. When the game was over, he jogged through a lane of guards. It was unnecessary. No one tried to steal his hat.

Last Monday afternoon, after a double-header with Washington, Mantle was mobbed on his way back to the dugout. Fans clutched at his clothing and one punched him on the jaw. Mantle was taken to the hospital with a severely bruised face.

If there was breast-beating Monday night over the incident, last night there was apathy. Neither Mantle, the management nor the fans expected any trouble.

Mantle, casually warming up with Yogi Berra before the game, grunted away the thought that his back might be a target for debris or abuse. He had not completely forgotten Memorial Day, however.

He said he had been on a diet of lasagna since Monday. It was the most solid food he could chew without flinching. He waggled his jaw, grimaced and admitted that he was looking forward to biting, painlessly, into steak.

The Stadium management, convinced that Monday's rhu-rarb had been concocted from heat, hysteria and a large crowd, provided no special guards for the big center fielder. Only a routine plea to keep off the grass after the game was made over the loudspeaker.

But if Mantle and the management were unperturbed, the fans in the center-field bleachers could hardly have cared less.

They sat on their hands when Mantle drifted into right-center and pulled down Marty Keough's long fly for the game's first putout. Their mouths were closed when he drew a walk in the bottom half of the first inning.

As Mantle's nearest neighbors, the bleacherites expressed a certain noblesse oblige.

Rose and Bess Calannio, a pair of sisters from Queens, had kinder words for Mantle. They had also been at Monday's games.

"Mickey was justified if he pushed his way through," said Rose. "They could have hurt him."

"Mickey wouldn't hurt a soul," said Bess, dreamily.